WASHINGTON - The U.S. House of Representatives passed the fiscal year 2005 Defense Appropriations bill yesterday that contains more than $21 million in funding important to Patuxent River Naval Air Station and Southern Maryland at the request of Congressman Hoyer.

"The $21 million in defense funding included in this bill will support the growing number of important programs at Pax River and highlights the impressive capabilities of this installation which are critical to our nation's defense," said Congressman Hoyer. "The high number and wide variety of projects funded in the bill passed by the House demonstrate the technical expertise harnessed at the base and the growing number of high priority projects being trusted to the talented engineers and extremely competent workers at Pax.

"These programs are not only important to our state's economy, but will further enhance the technical testing capabilities at Pax and keep it at the forefront of naval aviation testing by increasing the safety and efficiency of our naval operations. Pax River continues to play a vital role in our national security and these funds reflect that status."

"I will work to ensure that this funding remains in the final legislation that will be signed in to law later this year," concluded Hoyer.

The funding that will benefit Pax River included in the Department of Defense Appropriations bill is listed below:

Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAV)/ Unmanned Combat Air Vehicles (UCAV), $1.5 Million

This funding will be used for upgrades at Patuxent River and Webster Field to better support Unmanned Aerial Vehicle/Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle (UAV/UCAV) Research, Development, Testing and Evaluation (RDT&E) programs. The increased use and success of the UAV/UCAV's in Afghanistan and Iraq highlights the need to further develop technologies associated with unmanned air vehicle systems to maximize their effectiveness. Upgrading the existing RDT&E resources and capabilities at Patuxent River to include the Webster Field complex will meet this need. The Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division at Patuxent River, MD serves as the Naval Air System Command's principal site for RDT&E for traditional manned naval aircraft and their associated weapons systems. It has fully instrumented and integrated open-air ranges and state of the art ground test capabilities, including the modeling and simulation facilities.

Naval Aviation Interoperability, $1.0 million

This funding will be used to acquire and install systems required to support carrier integration, engineering and interoperability evaluations for Naval Aviation systems at the NAWCAD Surface / Aviation Interoperability Laboratory (SAIL) - a new, unique capability at minimum cost. Trends in the use of communications and electronic information warfare systems in the battlefield today, together with the necessity to ensure joint interoperability, require changes in the way these systems are developed and tested. SAIL focuses directly on integrated ship / air systems interoperability RDT&E, is aligned with the Navy Transformation Plan, and will significantly enhance capabilities of Naval aviation.

Advanced Maritime Technology Center, $2.5 million

This funding will upgrade the maritime facility at Patuxent River to an Advanced Maritime Technology Center (AMTC) and will take advantage of the world class facilities at Pax River to meet the needs for new and emerging technologies of both military and Federal agencies supporting Homeland Defense. This funding will allow Pax to upgrade this facility so that they can use their technical expertise to improve the performance of small maritime combatant craft by miniaturizing the critical navigational, communications and sensor equipment needed on these boats in the same way they do for aircraft.

TES-N & P-3 Ground Station, $5 million

The TES-N Joint Fires Network provides real-time, multi-intelligence data from a broad range of intelligence gathering aircraft such as the U-2, Global Hawk, Predator and JSTARS. The TES-N is critical to the Navy to help process intelligence information gathered from a variety of sources and quickly provide that information to strike aircraft. This project will help improve the speed with which information is gathered, processed and disseminated from the intelligence aircraft, to the ships, ground stations and to strike aircrafts so that better decisions can be made more quickly.

This project puts Pax River right in the middle of the ongoing development and testing of technology that will continue to develop over the next ten years and is critical to the Navy and our nation's defense. Congressman Hoyer secured $2 million for this project in fiscal year 2004 and the funding included in the bill passed today will continue the program at Pax River.

Naval District Washington Firefighting, $1.5 Million

This funding will be used to purchase fire vehicles and will help address some of the serious funding shortfalls projected for firefighting operations at facilities within the Naval District Washington (NDW), including Patuxent River, Indian Head, US Naval Academy, Chesapeake Beach, Carderock, and Dahlgren. Significant shortfalls exist for personnel, operations and equipment needs at all of the facilities throughout the NDW, and that the ability of these federal firefighters to adequately protect the military personnel and equipment at these facilities is being dangerously diminished by these funding gaps. This funding will begin addressing these urgent needs to ensure the safety at our region's Naval facilities.

Composite Repair of Metal Structures, $1.0 million

The Navy continues to face a massive burden in maintaining its fleet of aging aircraft. In addition to being old and being used far beyond their originally intended service life, many of these aircraft were also built with materials susceptible to corrosion. This has led to a situation that forces the Navy to spend an inordinate percentage of its yearly Operations and Maintenance funds in maintaining these aircraft. Since there is no foreseeable expectation that this problem will be solved by increases in the Navy's aircraft procurement budget, the only real alternative is to develop new technology that will drastically reduce maintenance cost.

This funding will be used for the development and demonstration of bonded composite repair technology supported through Naval Air Systems Command Materials Division. Bonded composite repair technology for metal parts has the advantages of being adaptable to confined areas and complex shapes, it requires no new holes to be drilled in the existing structure, it is immune from corrosion itself and also protects the repair area from any future corrosion, it is extremely efficient structurally and will have the least impact on the surrounding structure. This technology also offers the best chance for the Navy to substantially reduce their current high maintenance costs.

Adapting Fleet Support and Readiness Training for a Transforming Fleet, $2 Million

This funding will be used to provide soldiers and sailors with a realistic and effective means to train while deployed at sea. Additionally, the funding will help enhance integrated test, training and experimentation for the aircraft and ships of the Carrier Strike Groups and Expeditionary Strike Groups. The funding will be directed to fleet activities so that they can take advantage of the expertise at Pax River to develop better capabilities for occupational purposes. Newly developed training tools will improve the safety and reduce the risk of the soldiers and sailors in the field and will integrate resources to enhance and support the capabilities of the joint forces on multiple fronts.

Age Exploration Model Validation and Enhancement (AGE), $4 million

This funding will continue the development of the AGE computer software program. The AGE program is designed to automate the maintenance procedures of Naval aircraft. The program will track replacement parts, track maintenance performed, and identify maintenance requirements in advance of when the service is necessary. This will maximize the "up time" readiness for Naval aircraft through one autonomous platform to identify these problems. Congressman Hoyer secured $5 million for the AGE project last year and the funding secured this year will continue the development of this program.

Maintenance Data Warehouse (MDW) Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), $3 million

This funding will continue the Maintenance Data Warehouse Program at the NAVAIR System Command in Patuxent River, MD which provides capability for the National Capitol Region. In FY02, the Naval Aviation Logistics Data Analysis program began development of a "data warehouse" as part of an effort to provide one, centralized Navy Aviation Logistics Database and Management Information System. Since that time, The Naval Air Systems Command has expanded the Maintenance Data Warehouse program so that squadron commanders and other officials will have new insight into the state of readiness of units and material, the ability to identify maintenance trends, the capability to predict weaknesses and potential failures, and the means to prevent costly accidents and downtime. Congressman Hoyer secured $3 million for this project last year and the funding included in the bill passed today will continue the program at Pax River.

The Senate must now pass the fiscal year 2005 Department of Defense Appropriations bill and then the differences in the two bills must be worked out in a Conference Committee before the bill may become law.

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